

Overview of Best Practices for Supporting Teachers¹ For Pennsylvania Department of Education

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Since 1987, school districts, intermediate units, charter schools, and area vocational-technical schools in Pennsylvania have been required by the Pennsylvania Code (22 Pa. Code §49.16 and §49.83) to have a state-approved teacher induction plan for first-year teachers. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) provides a set of guidelines for districts to develop their induction plans (updated in [2019](#)). These guidelines provide broad expectations for mentoring and induction programs, including the identification of local induction teams (to include school principals) and their responsibilities, as well as expectations for mentors and inductees.

Identifying Best Practices in Mentoring and Induction Systems

The current PDE guidance highlights some of the elements identified as best practices in mentoring and induction. However, with the growing attention given to needed programs to support new teachers, the breadth of practices and research on their importance has grown. The [New Teacher Center's 2016 review](#) of state policies to support new teachers found that very few states had developed the kind of comprehensive induction programs for teachers and principals necessary to ensure their success.

In their review [A Snapshot on Mentoring and Induction: Evidence-Based Practices to Support Equity](#), the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL) identified a set of evidence-based mentoring and induction practices:

- Rigorous mentor selection based on the qualities of an effective mentor
- Ongoing professional development and support for mentors
- Sanctioned time for mentor-teacher interactions
- Multi-year mentoring
- Intensive and specific guidance moving teaching practice forward

¹ See also mentoring and induction resources available from the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (<https://gtlcenter.org/technical-assistance/toolkits/mi-toolkit>).

- Professional teaching standards and data-driven conversations
- Ongoing professional development for beginning teachers
- Clear roles and responsibilities for administrators
- Collaboration with all stakeholders

These represent a subset of the New Teacher Center’s (NTC) [2018 Teacher Induction Program Standards](#) (see Appendix). These comprehensive standards were developed by NTC through work with multiple state agencies, school districts, policy-making organizations, and a range of educational institutions. Collectively they define the characteristics of high-quality induction programs to support the development of new teacher effectiveness, improve teacher retention, strengthen teacher leadership, increase student learning, and support equitable outcomes for every learner. Several states have developed and disseminated to districts guidelines or standards for mentoring and induction programs (e.g., [MS](#), [NY](#), [RI](#)) and many districts have adopted or adapted them as well.

States’ Guidance

There are numerous state and district induction plans and guidance documents that speak to the programmatic elements identified by GTL and NTC. Across them several themes emerge (at right). Several state agency approaches are summarized below.

<p>Common Themes in State Plans:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide an extended period of mentoring 2. Include guidance on the selection and support given to mentors 3. Focus on evidence-based practices in mentoring 4. Evaluate impact or effectiveness of mentoring <p>Some extend these programs to principals as well.</p>

Hawaii

The Hawaii State Department of Education recognized that induction programs varied widely across the state, so the department redesigned its approach to provide a comprehensive, statewide effort to support new teachers by launching the [Hawaii Teacher Induction Program Standards](#). These standards provide every beginning teacher with a three-year comprehensive induction program, including two years of intensive mentoring. The standards address:

- A system pairing each beginning teacher with a trained instructional mentor.
- A strictly observed maximum ratio of beginning teacher to full-released mentor of 15 to 1.
- A defined process and criteria for mentor selection.
- Ongoing research-based training specifically designed for mentors of beginning teachers.
- Ongoing mentor support via forums, peer coaching, and professional learning communities.
- Ongoing new teacher professional development and professional learning communities designed to meet the unique needs of the beginning teacher.
- A beginning teacher professional growth plan that addresses specific skill and content gaps.
- Induction program completion requirements for all beginning teachers.

- Data collection to assess implementation and impact for continuous program improvement.

Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring Programs](#) outlines critical induction and mentoring program elements for beginning teachers and administrators, as well as teachers and administrators who are new to the district or to the role. The guidance outlines the roles and responsibilities of mentors and inductees. Like the PDE guidance, it also provides a description of the alignment to licensure and evaluation. It also provides for processes to evaluate the effectiveness of induction and mentoring programs. The state also provides an [annual induction and mentoring report](#) and maintains a comprehensive set of [resources](#) for districts, including evaluation tools and program design documents.

New York State

The New York State Education Department requires districts to develop and follow mentoring plans (see <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/resteachers/teacherinduction.html>). The state provides [guidance](#) in the content of these plans, which must include a set of required elements:

- A mentor selection procedure—available to district staff and the public upon request
- Mentor training and preparation
- Defined set of mentor activities
- Allocation of time for mentoring activities to take place

The state also provides a number of resources to support local districts in developing their induction and mentoring plans. These include:

- The [New York State New York State Mentoring Standards](#) outlines 10 research-based program standards and performance indicators that address: Program Philosophy and Purposes; Program Design; Program Implementation; Mentor Selection; Mentor Development; Mentors Have Clearly Defined Roles and Responsibilities; Mentoring Skill and Knowledge; Shared Leadership and Administration; Beginning Teacher Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions; and Program Evaluation.
- An [Assessing the Development of Your District Teacher Mentoring Programs rubric](#) to guide districts in developing and implementing their plan.

South Carolina

The South Carolina [Induction and Mentoring Guidelines](#) focuses on four guiding principles:

- Implementation and support of a comprehensive induction and mentoring section of the district's Expanded Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT) Standards
- Roles, selection, development, and support of stakeholders
- Mentoring towards efficacy and improved practice
- Systematic program evaluation and improvement

Virginia

The Virginia Department of Education provides a set of [guidelines](#) for mentoring programs across the state that:

- Establish program objectives
- Manage the local mentor program
- Develop the program design
- Develop mentor selection criteria
- Establish school administrator responsibilities
- Develop mentor training
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the mentor program

The state also developed [guidelines](#) specifically for “hard to staff schools.” The state also provides a set of [videos](#) that outline the characteristics of high-quality mentoring programs.

Wisconsin

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction [guidance](#) provides information for district program leaders and practicing mentors in Wisconsin to help them make informed induction and mentoring program decisions. The guide focuses on five(?) programmatic foci for induction programs:

- Mentor training
- Consistent and intensive work conversations (minimum 180 minutes/month)
- Instructionally focused support from the mentor (including equitable student learning and classroom practice to meet student needs)
- Communities of practice (including beginning teachers, mentors, and principals)
- Programmatic data collection

Examples of District Guidance

Many states require or encourage local or intermediary units to develop induction and mentoring plans. The examples below are a small sample but include some unique features:

- The Fort Worth Independent School District [New Teacher Induction and Mentoring Program](#). outlines not only the roles and responsibilities of principals but those of mentors and new teachers.
- The Los Angeles Urban Teacher Residency [Mentor Handbook](#) details roles, responsibilities, and expectations for the program. It also describes their unique inquiry cycle, program overview, and other pertinent residency information, like pacing guides and program policies.

- The Webster Public Schools [Induction and Mentoring Handbook](#) outlines the responsibilities of various members of the school community in the mentoring program, as well as qualifications and responsibilities of the mentor and mentee.
- The Queens College - New York City Department of Education Urban Teacher Residency [Handbook](#) provides details about the program components, roles, and responsibilities of the mentor, intern, and field supervisors. This handbook also includes multiple tools and resources ready for direct adoption/adaptation by schools.

Rural schools provide unique sets of challenges for mentoring and induction programs:

- The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders brief [10 Mentoring and Induction Challenges in Rural Schools and How to Address Them](#) focuses on the unique challenges rural schools may encounter with the implementation of mentoring and induction programs. and provides strategies to address them. The brief includes program spotlights that highlight examples of mentoring and induction strategies utilized in the field.

Appendix:

New Teacher Center's (NTC) 2018 Teacher Induction Program Standards

Foundational

1.0: Program Vision, Goals, and Institutional Commitment

- 1.1: Program leader and key decision-makers create a program vision, mission, and program design focused on advancing student learning and accelerating beginning teacher effectiveness within a comprehensive system of development for all educators.
- 1.2: Program leader and key decision-makers develop specific program goals based on induction program vision and mission, program standards, research, and state and local policy to guide program implementation and improvement.
- 1.3: Program leader and key decision-makers match program goals with adequate time for implementation and sufficient financial resources to accomplish program goals, support continuous improvement, and ensure long-term sustainability.
- 1.4: Program leader and key decision-makers guide the development and implementation of a comprehensive system of program evaluation and continuous improvement based upon vision and mission, goals, induction program standards, and program design.
- 1.5: Program leader and key decision-makers ensure that a broad coalition of stakeholders are well-informed and collaborate on and advocate for effective, research-based program implementation that aligns with the institution's vision, mission, and instructional priorities.
- 1.6: Program leader and key decision-makers work to improve conditions that affect beginning teacher success and their students' learning.

2.0: Program Leadership and Communication

- 2.1: Program leader is designated to lead induction program and is given organizational and decision-making influence, along with adequate support, time, and resources to maximize program impact and sustainability.
- 2.2: Program leader develops various reciprocal communication systems and program structures to solicit stakeholder input and promote broad understanding and ownership.
- 2.3: Program leader collaborates and coordinates with organizational leaders to ensure that the program's vision and mission, goals, design, and practices align with teacher preparation, professional learning, leadership development programs, and teacher/school leader evaluation.

2.4: Program leader coordinates induction efforts with other school and district initiatives to advance standards based, culturally responsive instruction and an optimal learning environment for every student.

2.5: Program leader and key leaders systematically share evaluation findings with stakeholders for the purposes of collaborative programmatic decision-making, improvement, and accountability.

3.0: School Leader Engagement

3.1: Program leader supports school leaders to implement policies, provide resources, and create conditions that promote beginning teacher success.

3.2: Program leader creates clear roles, expectations, and conditions to support school leaders and mentors to work in partnerships focused on improving beginning teacher instructional practice.

3.3: Program leader provides, and participates as a learner with school leaders in, ongoing professional learning that builds and sustains their capacity to advance beginning teacher development and mentor effectiveness.

3.4: Program leader supports school leaders and instructional leadership teams to align induction activities with other school-based goals, instructional priorities, and evaluation procedures.

3.5: Program leader engages with school leaders to form instructionally focused partnerships that include mentors and instructional leadership teams to advance school-based goals and instructional priorities.

Structural

4.0: Mentor Roles and Responsibilities, Selection, and Assignment

4.1: Program leader develops and widely communicates clearly defined mentor roles and responsibilities that focus on the advancement of beginning teacher practice, student learning, and teacher leadership.

4.2: Program leader and key decision-makers design a formal, rigorous process for mentor recruitment and selection that is based on criteria and is consistent with mentor roles and responsibilities.

4.3: Program leader manages mentor assignments to beginning teachers according to program design, mentor roles and responsibilities, and other relevant factors.

4.4: Program leader engages key decision-makers and stakeholders in a continuous process of program improvement to ensure the quality and effectiveness of mentor recruitment, selection, and assignment.

5.0: Mentor Professional Learning, Learning Communities, and Onboarding

5.1: Program leader designs and implements initial mentor onboarding to ensure mentor has understanding of program vision, mission, and goals and sufficient foundational knowledge and skills to establish initial trust and credibility with beginning teachers and school leaders.

5.2: Program leader designs and implements a system of mentor professional learning that is research-based and aligned with the program's vision, mission, and goals and district instructional priorities.

5.3: Program leader provides content for a curriculum of mentor professional learning that is guided by research, standards, district instructional priorities, and the developmental needs of mentors and beginning teachers.

5.4: Program leader designs and implements mentor communities of practice/forums in which mentors collaboratively apply and extend new learning, reflect on their practice, and examine data of student learning, beginning teacher practice, and in-field observations.

5.5: Program leader systematically and continuously assesses the quality and effectiveness of mentor professional learning.

6.0: Mentor Formative and Summative Assessment of Practice

6.1: Program leader establishes expectations to guide effective mentor practice and accountability that are research based and aligned with mentor standards, program vision and mission, and district

6.2: Program leader guides mentors in a system of continuous improvement and accountability that is based on ongoing formative assessments and informed by qualitative and quantitative data from mentor/beginning teacher interactions.

6.3: Program leader designs and implements formative in-field coaching cycles between program leader or lead coach and mentors and between mentor peers to advance mentor growth and development.

6.4: Program leader routinely provides mentors with group and individualized, data-informed formative and summative feedback that is grounded in mentor expectations and mentor standards.

6.5: Program leader establishes a secure and useful data collection system to inform individual and group formative assessment of mentors using aggregated and disaggregated data to foster continuous improvement.

7.0: Beginning Teacher Professional Learning, Learning Communities, and Onboarding

7.1: Program leader collaborates with appropriate school and district leaders to develop and implement a comprehensive onboarding program for beginning teachers.

7.2: Program leader designs and implements beginning teacher learning communities for professional learning, problem-solving, and collaborative inquiry.

7.3: Program leader provides professional learning within learning communities for beginning teachers that is guided by research, teaching and content standards, district instructional priorities, and the developmental needs of beginning teachers to advance quality instruction and the learning of every student.

7.4: Program leader guides mentors to assist beginning teachers in applying new learning from beginning teacher professional learning and learning communities.

7.5: Program leader continually assesses the relevance and effectiveness of beginning teacher learning communities and professional learning to advance quality instruction and the learning of every student.

Instructional

8.0: Instructionally Focused Formative Assessment of Beginning Teacher Practice

- 8.1: Program leader ensures that the beginning teacher formative assessment system is research-based, instructionally focused, and comprised of high-leverage tools and processes that are grounded in content and teaching standards.
- 8.2: Program leader guides mentors in using high-leverage formative assessment tools with beginning teachers to gather data of practice and inform ongoing teaching-coaching cycles to improve instruction and the learning of every student.
- 8.3: Program leader ensures that mentors support beginning teachers to develop instructionally focused goals based on their context, content focus, formative data of practice, and developmental needs in alignment with district instructional priorities.
- 8.4: Program leader ensures that mentors support beginning teachers to prioritize the school leader's evaluation focus in ongoing formative assessment and improvement efforts.

9.0: Instructional Mentoring for Optimal Learning Environments

- 9.1: Program leader assists mentors to collaborate with beginning teachers to apply effective, research-based teaching practices and to create emotionally, intellectually, and physically safe learning environments that allow every student to engage in productive struggle with rigorous content.
- 9.2: Program leader ensures that mentors have the knowledge, skills, tools, and resources to help beginning teachers provide every student access to relevant and rigorous, standards-aligned lessons and curriculum.
- 9.3: Program leader assists mentors to enhance the capacity of beginning teachers to plan and deliver standards-based instruction that is grounded in analysis of student learning and knowing students to ensure they are meeting the variable needs of every student.
- 9.4: Program leader assists mentors to support instructional use of technology in the classroom to meet the diverse needs of every student.
- 9.5: Program leader assists mentors to support beginning teachers in collaborating with families, colleagues, instructional leadership teams, and the broader educational community to ensure the success of every student.

10.0: Instructional Mentoring for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- 10.1: Program leader engages mentors in supporting and advocating for equitable and inclusive learning environments that embrace and build on students' ethnicity, race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, giftedness, and socio-economic, cultural, academic, linguistic, and family backgrounds.
- 10.2: Program leader guides mentors to assist beginning teachers in using culturally responsive pedagogical practices to provide every student with equitable access to rigorous, grade-level content.
- 10.3: Program leader supports mentors and beginning teachers to gain proficiency in meeting the diverse needs of every student, including students with diagnosed and undiagnosed learning differences, and to uphold related laws.